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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Sub-Commission
on Prevention of Discrimination
and Protection of Minorities
Agenda item 6

Mr. Chairman.

Distinguisned members of the Sub-Commission:

Over the years, Pax Romana has expressed its grave concern at the reports of gross human rights violations in East Timor. These reports have been amply substantiated by Amnesty International, Asia Watch, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid and many other Church and Human Rights groups. More recently, a prestigious Indonesian academic institution, the Gajah Mada University, has added its criticisms of the situation prevailing in East Timor.

The 130-page report prepared by Gajah Mada's Centre for Rural and Regional Development was commissioned by the Indonesian-appointed "governor" of occupied East Timor and funded by the Bank of Indonesia. The findings concur with most of the criticisms directed at Indonesia's actions in East Timor.

While Indonesia claims that the people of East Timor have accepted integration with Indonesia, the authoritative study reveals that "this appears not to be the case for the East Timorese people".

Some of the points and recommendations made in the study:

* economic development is hampered by a war economy;

* there is an overdose of control by the armed forces and there should be an immediate end to the prolonged war condition;

* improvement in roads, transport, education and health care have not overcome the problems that resulted in the deaths of East Timorese people;

* outsiders hold most important government positions but are ignorant of local culture;

* prolonged warfare has led to excesses in the form of human rights abuses by the security apparatus.

It is evident from this comprehensive study by an Indonesian academic institute that the root cause of the pattern of human rights violations in East Timor may be found in the denial of the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination.

It is now almost 15 years since Indonesian armed forces invaded East Timor.

Indonesia's armed attack against East Timor was condemned by the General Assembly and the Security Council. It should be noted that the Security Council adopted its resolution 384 (1975) by a rare unanimous vote and called upon the government of Indonesia to withdraw "without delay" all its forces from the territory of East Timor.

Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have reaffirmed the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly Res. 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

A majority of the United Nations' Member States has rejected Indonesia's claims to East Timor.

It is against this background that the question of East Timor has to be viewed today.

As we address this tragic conflict that has already cost the lives of more than 1/3 of the indigenous inhabitants of East Timor, we cannot lose sight of the root cause of the problem. The denial of the East Timorese peoples'

right to self-determination has led to the tragic human rights situation in East Timor today. Peaceful demonstrations by students are met with force as we witnessed during His Holiness Pope John II's visit to East Timor in October 1989 and during a brief visit to the territory in January this year by the U.S. Ambassador in Jakarta, Mr. John Monjo.

Pax Romana continues to view General Assembly Res. 37/30 (1982) as the best framework for a comprehensive resolution of the conflict that opposes the people of East Timor and the Indonesian government.

The best efforts of the Secretary-General in mediating this conflict may be crowned with success only if the government of Indonesia decides to comply with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, have been dragging on since 1982 without any noticeable progress. In the meantime, East Timorese lives are destroyed by continuing warfare. It is obvious to us that Indonesia is negotiating in bad faith since we find it hard to reconcile its professed willingness to cooperate with the Secretary-General in his mediation efforts with an escalation in the military actions against the Resistance forces and unarmed civilians.

A climate of dialogue and peace which promised to take hold with the end of the cold war between the superpowers is now clouded by a major regional conflict. This conflict is taking place almost 15 years after the invasion of East Timor by Indonesian forces and it should serve as a reminder to the international community that the threat or use of force in international relations cannot be condoned for we risk setting dangerous precedents.

Pax Romana hopes that the government in Indonesia will come to its senses and realise that brute force cannot resolve the East Timor problem and will open up serious dialogue with the representatives of the people of East Timor.

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for
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